How HR Can Help Employees 'Earn the Commute'

HR Brew | Mikaela Cohen | February 12, 2026

Because some employees are dissatisfied with their commutes.



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Is your workplace worth the commute?

Most workers (62%) are relatively satisfied with their commutes, but some say it's a time suck (38%), money drain (32%), or stressful (30%), according to November data from real estate analytics firm Leesman. Satisfaction also dips the longer the commute: 92% are satisfied with 15 minutes or less, 54% with 45–60 minutes, and 35% with two or more hours.

Leaders have been trying to "earn the commute" for years, Amanda Kross, head of Americas consulting at commercial real estate firm JLL, told HR Brew. But for companies wanting to improve the "workplace experience," she said the commute has been increasingly top of mind.

How to earn the commute. HR can approach the commute with an "outside in and inside out" strategy, Kross said. "Outside in" focuses on the office location and how convenient it is for employees. She advises JLL's clients to look at transportation accessibility and neighborhood amenities and services that may improve the employee experience.

"You can have the best physical office, but if those are big barriers, you're going to run into challenges with that commute-worthy experience," Kross said.

"Inside out" refers to the in-office experience, she added. This can be improved with flexible and comfortable workspaces, and providing employees with personalization options.

Some companies are increasingly switching from individual or dedicated workspaces to shared and collaborative spaces to give employees more variety. And some HR pros are also redesigning workspaces so that they marry the home and office work experience, or support neurodivergent employees with lighting and noise adaptability, HR Brew previously reported.

But, no matter the office design, Kross said HR needs to focus on managers and leaders, because "you can do all of that, and if you don't have leaders and managers in the office engaging with their employees, you're still going to struggle to make that a commute-worthy experience."

What else can HR do? If you don't have the ability to reconstruct your office, or have a limited budget for office improvements, you may be asking yourself what else you can do. Focus on "flexibility and time," Kross said, and provide clarity around hours when employees are expected to be in the office.

"Does it matter if everyone is there, nine to five, or eight to six?...Can it be different hours that then people can commute at less congested times, and they can do their family or personal things on the fringes of the day?" she said.

HR can also map the employee journey in the office, she added, collecting feedback on what technology, signage, and in-office services are and aren't useful—that's "where you invest your money."

"Your people need meaningful experiences, and the meaningful experience can happen at the ping pong table…it can happen in the cafe," Kross said. "But, if they're not getting that meaningful experience through the interactions they're having with people in person, the elements of that commute are going to feel more painful."